

CLASSIC *fm* Collector's choice

The 50 discs that should be on your shelf

The shelf so far

- 1 Holst: *The Planets*
EMI 567 7482
- 2 Schubert:
Piano Quintet, 'The Trout'
Decca 452 3932
- 3 Puccini: *La bohème*
EMI 567 7502
- 4 Schumann and Grieg:
Piano Concertos in A minor
EMI 557 5622
- 5 Beethoven: *Symphony No.9*
DG Galleria 415 8322
- 6 Elgar: *'Enigma' Variations*
EMI 567 7482
- 7 Strauss: *Four Last Songs*
DG 447 4222
- 8 Beethoven:
Piano Sonatas Nos 8 & 14
Decca 476 7218
- 9 Tchaikovsky:
Violin Concerto
RCA Victor 09026 61495 2
- 10 Mozart:
Symphonies Nos 40 & 41
DG 445 5482
- 11 Bach: *Goldberg Variations*
Sony Classical SN3K 87703
- 12 Elgar: *Cello Concerto*
EMI Great Recordings of
the Century 562 8862
- 13 Mahler: *Symphony No.5*
EMI 557 3852
- 14 Rachmaninov:
Piano Concerto No.2
Decca 466 3752
- 15 Bach: *St Matthew Passion,*
BWV244
Teldec 2564 64347-2
- 16 Bruch: *Violin Concerto No.1*
Decca 475 8133
- 17 Mozart: *Requiem*
Philips 432 0872
- 18 Saint-Saëns: *Symphony*
No.3, 'Organ'
Decca 430 7202

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Rodrigo: *Concierto de Aranjuez*

The Spanish composer drew inspiration from the rich culture of his country to craft a beautiful guitar concerto that established him as a composing legend

WORDS NIGEL GAYLER

No prizes for guessing the best-loved guitar concerto of all time; it is, of course, the one with the unpronounceable name!

The *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquín Rodrigo takes its name from the Aranjuez Palace, once a royal summer residence situated south of Madrid. Rodrigo could be regarded as a real-life sorcerer's apprentice, as in 1927 he went to Paris and became a student of the French composer Paul Dukas. From there he travelled around Europe, returning to his native Spain in 1939 to make Madrid his home. The *Concierto de Aranjuez* was premiered in Barcelona on 9 November 1940 by Regino Sainz de la Maza, its dedicatee.

Most of the world's top guitarists have performed and recorded this extremely successful concerto, with one notable exception – the legendary Andrés Segovia. One of his pupils, the Australian John Williams, taped a fine account back in 1965. It gets off to a brisk start with a self-assured Williams in superb form; his Adagio is faster than most but still manages to capture the mood most eloquently. However, the digital re-mastering has exposed some rather noisy traffic outside the hall and it does tend to intrude. Another veteran guitarist is Britain's Julian Bream who brings to the table a version



Rodrigo: a real-life sorcerer's apprentice

that is awash with colour and is a masterclass in virtuosic guitar playing. The gorgeous cor anglais opening to the slow movement sets the scene in which Bream takes a more leisurely pace than Williams. The undeniable romanticism here is sandwiched by the jolliness of the two outer movements.

The highly regarded Scottish-born guitarist David Russell is another contender in our top five. His performance is stylish and enthusiastic, but where the Adagio is, at times, quite restless, the Finale has a tendency to drag a little. The second of our two Australians, Craig Ogden, obviously enjoys this piece – his version is bright and breezy and is sympathetically accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Sachio Fujioka. There is passionate playing in the middle

movement, which can also be said of Malaga-born Pepe Romero's account. His is like a long lingering Spanish siesta, being the slowest of all our contenders, but nevertheless it is an engaging performance, ending with an appropriately laid-back Finale.

All our contenders are worthy of serious consideration when choosing a version for your collection. But there is one recording that does seem to have just the right amount of pace, passion and panache, and that is by Craig Ogden, brilliantly engineered on Chandos. ■

Nigel produces *The New CD Show*, Saturdays 9pm-10pm, and *If You Liked That, You'll Like This*, Sundays 12noon-2pm



Craig Ogden: plays with pace, passion and panache!

Your options



David Russell
(guitar), Naples
Philharmonic
Orchestra/Kunzel
Imaginatively
and beautifully
performed.
Telarc CDB0459



John Williams
(guitar), Members
of the Philadelphia
Orchestra/Ormandy
Seemingly effortless
playing, in a great
vintage recording.
Sony SBK61716



Julian Bream
(guitar), Chamber
Orchestra of Europe/
John Eliot Gardiner
Caught at the height
of Bream's powers.
RCA Victor Gold Seal
09026 61611-2



Pepe Romero
(guitar), Academy
of St Martin in the
Fields/Marriner
A Spanish charmer
of a performance
from Romero.
Philips 475 6360

The one to own



Rodrigo: *Concierto de Aranjuez*
Craig Ogden (guitar), BBC
Philharmonic/Sachio Fujioka
Manchester was the location for
this recording, but sit back, close
your eyes and you're transported to
sunny Spain in this truly outstanding
performance. Ogden delivers enough
emotion and vigour to make this the
overall winner in a competitive field.
Chandos CHAN 9604

